



US and Mexico Work Together on Border Town Brownfield

Naco, Arizona is directly across the border from Naco, Sonora-Mexico, and the two cities have worked together on regional issues over the years and are recognized as a model for cross-border cooperation. Together, the cities teamed up again to address the problem of brownfields.

With a population of just 748, Naco is a rural, unincorporated town in Cochise County, Arizona. From the 1930s until the 1980s, the area was a major agribusiness route for the processing and shipping of cattle between Mexico and the United States. The U.S. Department of Agriculture required that all cattle coming into the United States be treated with pesticides, such as DDT, chlordane, and heptachlor. The site contains former cattle dip vats contaminated with pesticides, as well as a large number of dead animals, trash, and other buried waste.

As the city of Naco, Sonora-Mexico grew; its waste treatment plant did not. The plant became overburdened and unable to handle the high volume of raw sewage and industrial waste water. Frequent breakdowns resulted in overflows of the system, which poured sewage over the border and onto the U.S. crossing site.

Since the border crossing closed in the late 1980s, these spills have become the main source of pollution in Naco, Arizona. Selected for a Brownfields Pilot in 1999, Naco targeted 260 acres directly across the border from Naco, Sonora-Mexico.

Through cooperation from the communities, cities, counties, and emergency response teams on both sides of the border, Naco, Sonora received funding to build a new treatment plant, which has since been completed. Eliminating the threat of flooding opens up the U.S. border-crossing brownfields site to positive redevelopment opportunities.

Initial redevelopment plans include retail shops and restaurants incorporated in at least one shopping center, and light industrial facilities.